United Nations E/2009/58

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
26 May 2009

Original: English

Substantive session of 2009
Geneva, 6-31 July 2009
Item 13 (k) of the provisional agenda*
Economic and environmental questions: cartography

Report of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names on the work of its twenty-fifth session

(Nairobi, 5-12 May 2009)

Summary

The twenty-fifth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, convened in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2008/241, was held at the United Nations Office at Nairobi from 5 to 12 May 2009.

The present report describes the activities carried out at the twenty-fifth session and presents the major findings of the Group of Experts, with a primary focus on the importance of its work in supporting the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names and the essential contribution it continues to provide to Member States in the geographical information field and related cartographic areas.

* E/2009/100.

09-34994 (E) 190609

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I. Terms of reference

1. In pursuance of Economic and Social Council decision 2008/241, the Secretary-General invited the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names to convene its twenty-fifth session in Nairobi from 5 to 12 May 2009.

II. Attendance

2. The session was attended by 138 participants from 53 countries, representing 22 of the 23 geographic/linguistic divisions of the Group of Experts. Fourteen observers were present. The list of participants is contained in document GEGN/25/4. The list of documents is available online at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/25th-GEGN-Docs/GEGN-25-5.pdf. The provisional agenda for the twenty-sixth session of the Group of Experts is contained in the annex to the present document.

III. Officers of the session

3. The officers of the twenty-fifth session were:

Chairperson:
Helen Kerfoot

Vice-Chairpersons:
Brahim Atoui
Ferjan Ormeling

Rapporteurs:
Leo Dillon
William Watt

For the names of the Chairpersons of the divisions, see the website of the Group of Experts (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/ungegndivisions.htm). The officers of the working groups were:

Task Team for Africa

Convener:
Brahim Atoui

Rapporteur:
Naima Friha

Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy

Convener:
Ferjan Ormeling

Rapporteur:
Peter Jordan

Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers

Convener:
Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu

Rapporteur:
Trent Palmer

Working Group on Toponymic Terminology

Convener:
Staffan Nyström

Rapporteur:
Peder Gammeltoft

Working Group on Romanization Systems

Convener:
Peeter Päll

Rapporteur:
Catherine Cheetham

Working Group on Country Names

Convener:
Leo Dillon

Rapporteur:
Trent Palmer

Working Group on Publicity and Funding

Convener:
David Munro

Rapporteur:
Botolv Helleland

Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation

Convener:
Ki-Suk Lee

Rapporteur:
Botolv Helleland

Working Group on Exonyms

Convener:
Peter Jordan

Rapporteur:
Catherine Cheetham

Working Group on Pronunciation

Convener:
Dónall Mac Giolla Easpaig

Rapporteur:
Peder Gammeltoft

Working Group on the Promotion of the Recording and Use of Indigenous, Minority and Regional Language Group Geographical Names

Convener:
William Watt

Rapporteur:
Peder Gammeltoft

IV. Opening of the session

4. The Chairperson, Helen Kerfoot (Canada), opened the twenty-fifth session of the Group of Experts on 5 May 2009.

5. The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi made a statement on the role of standardizing geographical names in the work of the United Nations. The Deputy Director of the United Nations Statistics Division spoke of ongoing progress and challenges facing the Group of Experts.

6. Guest speaker Pali Lehohla, Chairperson of the United Nations Statistical Commission and Statistician-General of Statistics South Africa, addressed the experts on the statistical perspective of geographical names standardization, particularly in relation to the recent experience of South Africa.

V. Adoption of the agenda

7. The provisional agenda (GEGN/25/1) was adopted without change as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Report of the Chairperson.
4. Report of the secretariat of the Group of Experts.
5. Reports of the divisions.
6. Reports of the liaison officers and international organizations.
7. Task Team for Africa.
8. Implementation of resolutions and activities relating to the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation.
9. Activities relating to the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy.
10. Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers.
11. Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology.
12. Activities relating to the Working Group on Romanization Systems.
13. Activities relating to the Working Group on Country Names.
14. Activities relating to the Working Group on Publicity and Funding.

15. Activities relating to the Working Group on Exonyms.

16. Activities relating to the Working Group on Pronunciation.

17. Activities relating to the Working Group on the Promotion of the Recording and Use of Indigenous, Minority and Regional Language Group Geographical Names.

18. Toponymic guidelines for map editors and other editors.

19. Other toponymic issues.

20. Preparation for the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

21. Provisional agenda for the twenty-sixth session of the Group of Experts.

22. Adoption of the report.

8. The draft organization of work (GEGN/25/13) was adopted with the addition of a second special presentation on Wednesday, 6 May.

VI. Report of the Chairperson

9. The Chairperson presented her report (GEGN/25/10), outlining the 50-year history of advocacy by the Group of Experts for standardizing geographical names. The account of the history of the Group of Experts with respect to Africa was concluded by a discussion of recent activities of the Task Team for Africa. A summary was given of recent activities of the working groups and divisions, cooperation with the secretariat of the Group of Experts and liaison activity with scientific and other groups. The Chair thanked the United Nations Statistics Division (in particular the secretariat of the Group of Experts) and the Economic Commission for Africa for their ongoing support and for preparations for the current session.

VII. Report of the secretariat of the Group of Experts

10. The report (GEGN/25/11) noted recent publication and outreach efforts by the Group of Experts, including three information bulletins, an addendum to the *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names*[1] and a promotional postcard. Recent major restructuring of the Group of Experts website was reported, along with development of the World Geographical Names Database. Continued support from the secretariat for training workshops and other activities was reported. Thanks were expressed to the Economic Commission for Africa for organizing the successful Group of Experts poster exhibition in Nairobi.

[1] United Nations publication, Sales No. M.01.XVII.7.

VIII. Reports of the divisions

A. Dutch- and German-speaking Division

11. Working Paper No. 5 listed recent Division activities arranged under resolutions adopted at previous conferences. Of note were the EuroGeoNames project, an updated list of country names, guidelines for rendering place names on signposts and a symposium on geographical names as cultural heritage.

B. East Central and South-East Europe Division

12. Working Paper No. 16 advised of the following activities: a Division meeting, the addition of a new Division member, the establishment of a Division website and Division overview document and systemization of the documentation of the Division. The Division's website could be found at http://ungegn.cgi.hr.

C. Asia East Division (other than China)

13. Working Paper No. 19 reported on the direction the Division was to take in relation to such areas as database sharing and toponymic issues. A common system for the romanization of Korean was also under discussion.

D. Baltic Division

14. Working Paper No. 21 advised that Estonia was the current coordinator for the Division, with the Vice-Chair provided by the Russian Federation. The paper reported on the Divisional meetings of 2007 and 2008. A summary of the activities of the member countries was also provided. Member countries were involved in active exchanges of information, which had provided significant contributions to national standardization. The Baltic Division website could be found at http://www.eki.ee/knn/ungegn.

E. Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division

15. Working Paper No. 23 outlined the activities and structures of the member countries of the division and participation in international activities. Mention was made, in relation to the attendance at Division meetings, of members of other divisions participating and the benefits gained from such interaction. Significant progress had been made in many areas relating to geographical names.

F. Asia South-East and Pacific South-West Division

16. Working Paper No. 36 summarized the activities of the member countries. The release of a new version of the Division's Regional Gazetteer and Map was reported, together with some proposed improvements for those products. Also mentioned were the project to classify generic terms and future training directions. Concern was expressed about the non-attendance of many of the member countries, and assistance was sought from the Group of Experts in that regard.

G. Portuguese-speaking Division

17. As no member of the Division was present to summarize Working Paper No. 39, the Chair recommended that the paper be recorded as part of the documentation of the session and noted that the Division had held its second meeting in Brazil in 2008.

H. China Division

18. Working Paper No. 44 reported on the progress of standardization efforts of the Division, including improvements to the management of geographical names, research into their cultural importance and the raising of public awareness. Also mentioned were the training courses held in 2007 and 2008 with 500 participants.

I. Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic)

19. Working Paper No. 50 summarized the Division's eighth regional meeting, held in 2008, during which member countries had reported on their domestic activities and the workshops that had been held during the meeting. Directions for future work within the Division were outlined.

J. Arabic Division

20. Working Paper No. 53 reported on the regional meetings held in 2007 and 2008 under the auspices of the League of Arab States. The report advised that agreements had been reached on the final romanization system for the Arabic language, on the need to work together as a division more efficiently to implement resolutions of the Group of Experts and on the standardization of the geographical names gazetteer databases. A comprehensive dictionary of Arabic geographical names was proposed. The activities of the Division increased the awareness of geographical names. Also summarized were the activities within member countries. The Arabic Division website could be found at http://www.adegn.org.

K. Norden Division

21. Working Paper No. 64 summarized the 2008 Divisional meeting, where many and varied issues were discussed, including the implementation of resolutions of the Group of Experts, developments on geographical names laws and usage and administrative reforms. A Norden Division website had been established at http://nordendivision.nfi.ku.dk.

L. Africa West Division

22. Working Paper No. 79 reported on the establishment of a bureau for the Division and summarized its activities. A training workshop was held in 2008, during which 30 experts recommended that national bodies be established in all member countries. A further training course was proposed for late 2009.

M. United States of America/Canada Division

23. Working Paper No. 82 reported on the annual meetings held in both countries in 2007 and 2008. Activities of both member countries were summarized, including the provision by the United States of America of assistance to Afghanistan in establishing its national geographical names authority and the further development of Canada's geographical names database.

N. French-speaking Division

24. Working Paper No. 94 summarized the activities of the Division, including the alteration to the Division website (http://www.toponymiefrancophone.org), the areas of research focus for the Division and the implementation of the toponymic aspects of intangible cultural heritage in line with the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 2003.

O. General

25. The Chair observed that divisional reports had successfully embraced information from individual countries of a division, in ways suitable to the type and level of activity of the division. It was noted, however, that, for various reasons, eight divisions had not presented reports. The Chair encouraged interaction and assistance between divisions. In noting that several new division websites had been created, she offered the possibility of the inclusion of some web pages on the website of the Group of Experts for divisions that needed such help.

IX. Reports of the liaison officers and international organizations

26. The Chair presented document GEGN/25/7, requesting that the contact details for national geographical names authorities be updated by divisional members and returned to the secretariat in order to enable such details to be corrected in both printed and digital outputs.

A. Working Group on Geographical Names of the Commonwealth of Independent States Member States Council on Geodesy, Cartography, Cadastre and Earth Remote Sensing

27. Working Paper No. 24 focused on the exchange of information relating to the alteration of geographical names. Also noted was the decision to prepare an electronic bulletin to reflect both changes to existing geographical names and new geographical names.

B. Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research

28. Working Paper No. 63 outlined the development history of the Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica and the recent alterations to the database structure. The paper also advised of the linkages of the Gazetteer with other databases of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research.

C. International Council of Onomastic Sciences

29. Working Paper No. 80 reported on the twenty-third International Congress of Onomastic Sciences, held in 2008, during which a number of naming issues were addressed. Several members of the Group of Experts presented papers relating to geographical names at that Congress. The proceedings would be published on CD-ROM by June 2009.

D. International Hydrographic Organization

30. Working Paper No. 81 outlined the two geographical names aspects of the International Hydrographic Organization: the naming of undersea features and the limits of oceans and seas. Members of that organization had agreed to form a working group to prepare a draft for a new edition of the *Limits of Oceans and Seas*.[2]

E. Pan American Institute of Geography and History

31. At the suggestion of the Chair, Working Paper No. 83 was moved for discussion under Item 9 on activities relating to the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy, as the contents of the report related specifically to training matters.

F. General

32. The Chair emphasized the importance of liaison by the Group of Experts with other organizations in order to broaden the awareness of its work.

X. Task Team for Africa

33. Working Paper No. 84 was presented by the Convener of the Task Team for Africa. After a diagnosis of the situation of geographical names in Africa, the team formulated a report about the registered toponymic activities and those to be programmed. Also mentioned were the completed training sessions held in different African countries, including the most recent one, held in Nairobi from 1 to 3 May 2009.

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[2] International Hydrographic Organization, *Limits of Oceans and Seas*, Special Publication No. 23, 3rd Edition (Monte Carlo, 1953).

34. Working Paper No. 87 was presented by the South African Geographical Names Council and raised the difficulties encountered in setting up toponymic authorities. It proposed bilateral cooperation between different African countries. The importance of advocacy for geographical names standardization in Africa was emphasized. It was proposed that the Group of Experts work through the Task Team for Africa to develop a resolution for the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names to bring the significance of geographical names standardization to the attention of the African Union and to solicit its action.

XI. Implementation of resolutions and activities relating to the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation

35. In Working Paper No. 17, the Convener reported on the work of the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation and summarized the results of a joint meeting with the Working Group on Publicity and Funding in San Francisco in 2008.

36. The Chair presented documents GEGN/25/8a and GEGN/25/8b, describing the thematic organization of the 195 resolutions adopted by the nine United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names in English and French, respectively. A Spanish compendium was also proposed.

37. The Chair also presented document GEGN/25/9, on the 11 resolutions adopted at the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

38. In the absence of the author, the Chair took note of Working Paper No. 15, which contained a report on progress in activities relating to the standardization of geographical names in Afghanistan. In particular, she indicated the creation of a national names authority in April 2009. Acknowledgement was expressed for those achievements during a difficult period.

39. In Working Paper No. 18, an expert from the Working Group outlined a database developed for resolutions of the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names, initiated in 2008 by the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation. The structure of the database, now accessible through the Group of Experts website, was appreciated by the meeting. That database was in English, with a French version to be worked on with the French-speaking Division.

40. An expert from the Norden Division presented Working Paper No. 28, introducing the Finnish Place Name Lexicon, published in 2007, which gave explanations of 4,700 standardized place names in Finland. It was also mentioned that a website named "Places, names and stories" was newly created.

41. Working Paper No. 38, presented by an expert from the Norden Division, summarized expected changes in the Place-Name Act of Norway. The changes would give owners of farms and small holdings the right to decide on the spelling of the names of their properties, which might lead to a reduced degree of required standardization of such names.

XII. Activities relating to the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy

42. In Working Paper No. 2, the Convener highlighted the training courses held since the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names: in Ouagadougou and Timişoara, Romania, in 2008 and in Nairobi (in 2009) and the course of the Pan American Institute of Geography and History in Quito in 2008. He elaborated on the most recent course in Nairobi, which had 24 students from eight East African countries and lecturers from Algeria, Australia, Canada, Germany, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Netherlands, South Africa and the Economic Commission for Africa. The course was made possible by financial support from the African Organization of Cartography and Remote Sensing and the United Nations Statistics Division. He further mentioned the international training courses currently planned for Kuwait, Turkey and Western Africa, and requested the China Division to present a report on its training programme in toponymy at the next session of the Group of Experts. Finally, he referred to the special issue of *Onoma*, edited by Botolv Helleland, on toponymic education.

43. Working Paper No. 83 presented the activities of the Pan American Institute of Geography and History during the period 2007-2009. Reference was made to the course held in Quito in 2008, organized in cooperation with the Instituto Geográfico Militar, the national mapping agency. The instructors came from Honduras, Mexico and the United States.

44. In Working Paper No. 49, an expert from the Arabic Division reported on training courses on geographical names held in Jordan. Those courses were organized by the National Committee on Geographical Names of Jordan. The courses aimed mainly to raise awareness of the importance of geographical names and to introduce the various romanization systems of the Arabic script.

45. In the absence of an expert from the Portuguese-speaking Division, the Chair of the Group of Experts presented Working Paper No. 43 on the cooperation between Brazil and Canada in training and designing a sustainable programme for the standardization of geographical names in Brazil. The report outlined Canadian involvement and highlighted the course "Introduction to standardization of geographical names", held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2008. The course enrolled more than 50 students from Brazil. It was suggested that training materials be made available on the Division website.

46. In Working Paper No. 20, an expert of the Asia East Division (other than China) reported on the fourteenth International Seminar on the Naming of Seas, held in Tunisia in 2008 as a pre-Congress special session of the thirty-first International Geographical Congress. Forty participants discussed naming questions in 25 paper presentations and a panel discussion. The next seminar would be held in Sydney, Australia, from 3 to 5 September 2009.

47. In his summary, the Convener offered assistance in planning a programme and finding lecturers, when local organizers took the initiative for a training course. Also, some financial support might be sought from the United Nations Statistical Division, mainly for the participation of individuals from developing countries and resource persons. Future tasks of the Working Group included making available a wide range of educational materials on the Working Group website and updating typical programmes according to the new course models.

XIII. Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers

48. The representative of the Dutch- and German-speaking Division discussed in Working Paper No. 4 a special interdisciplinary project known as the History of Mining Activities in Tyrol and Adjacent Areas (HiMAT). The 10-year study would include the collection and interpretation of geographical names related to historic mining sites in Tyrol (Austria). More details about the project were available (in German) at http://icosweb.net.

49. Working Paper No. 12, submitted by the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, provided information on an onomastic guidebook to the Hohe Tauern National Park (Austria). The guide identified the park's variety of geographical names, including for physical features, flora and fauna, land use areas and human settlements. The guide would be available in October 2009 at the park.

50. With Working Paper No. 31, the representative of the Dutch- and German-speaking Division provided an update on the work of Austria to transform its 1:50,000 and 1:200,000 topographic maps into the Universal Transverse Mercator projection. What made that topic relevant to the Group of Experts was the associated work to update, through field collection, the names shown on the map sheets. All the 1:50,000 sheets would have undergone two cycles of updates by the end of 2009.

51. In Working Paper No. 45, the China Division gave a brief introduction to China's development of coding systems for its first- and second-order administrative divisions. The widely used coding system included the following elements: Chinese name of administrative division, romanized name, six-digit numerical code, and three-letter code.

52. Working Paper No. 56 from the United States of America/Canada Division was an extract from Canada's Delineation Guidelines, a more extensive document describing the history, purpose and scope of capturing spatial extent for the named features of Canada. The project was necessitated by the need to reflect all of the toponyms in a Geographic Information System (GIS) environment. The presentation of such a conceptually challenging effort generated much discussion.

53. An expert from the Norden Division presented Working Paper No. 27, describing the background and structure of the Geographic Names Register web feature service of the National Land Survey of Finland. It was noted that there were multiple applications for the data disseminated by the web feature service. An appendix to the report included a list of the schemata incorporated in the register, with English translations.

54. Working Paper No. 34, prepared by the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, provided a status report on the development of implementing rules for geographical names within the Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe (INSPIRE), a European Community directive related to environmental policies. Not yet finalized, those implementing rules were being developed by consensus among the stakeholders in the project. The geographical names data model was described, highlighting its simple yet flexible structure.

55. Working Paper No. 33, submitted by the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, provided a report on the EuroGeoNames project, now that the funded

period had come to an end. The geographical names data for 10 European countries were now available online at www.eurogeonames.com/refappl, with six more expected by the end of the year. The goal was to have all 27 European Union member States included in the service. The coordination for the continuation of the project had been transferred to EuroGeographics.

56. In association with Working Paper No. 75, the Africa South Division presented a video to demonstrate one of the many enhancements being made to the South African Geographical Names Council database. The video provided instructions on how to create and upload a sound file to the database.

57. Working Paper No. 40, "The Database of Geographical Names in Brazil — BNGB and the Process to Spread Place Names to Brazilian Society" was submitted by the Portuguese-speaking Division but not presented.

58. An expert of the Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic) presented Working Papers No. 51 and No. 70, which reported on two activities of the Iranian Committee for Standardization of Geographical Names. The first paper informed the session on developments related to the Iranian Geographical Names Database. Plans were under way to make the database information available through gazetteers. That goal was being advanced by the creation of the National Gazetteers and Publication Working Group of the Iranian Committee. The purpose of the working group would be to collect, document and disseminate the names of all of the geographical features of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

59. The Arabic Division's Working Paper No. 52 reported that the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics of Egypt had developed a GIS application for use in the 2006 census. The agency's GIS was updated with data, including large numbers of geographical names, collected in the field by census workers. By use of the GIS, the census data were now associated with the geographical features.

60. Working Paper No. 54, presented by the Arabic Division, discussed geographical names activity by Saudi Arabia. The national geographical names authority had recently been established, and work was under way to collect, register and catalogue geographical names into a national database. A wealth of data on the geographical features was being input into the database.

61. An expert from the Baltic Division discussed the National Place Names Register of Estonia in Working Paper No. 62. In July 2008 the Estonian Land Board assumed responsibility for the Register, which had allowed its integration with other information systems. A redesign of the Register was now freely available on the Internet at http://xgis.maaamet.ee/knravalik/.

62. Working Paper No. 65, submitted by the Asia East Division (other than China), provided an update on the effects of municipality mergers upon place names in Japan. Within the past 10 years, 3,200 municipalities had been consolidated into 1,700 municipalities. Through that process, 268 new municipality names had been created. The report generated much discussion on the rules for and the categorization of the new names.

63. Working Paper No. 71, given by an expert from the East Central and South-East Europe Division, reported on the toponymic work occurring in Turkey. The Board of Experts for Geographical Names of Turkey had established several working groups to undertake preparation of several gazetteers and database projects.

64. An expert from the Arabic Division, in Working Paper No. 86, provided a status report on the creation of an Access database for multiple Algerian topographic map series. The database allowed for the storage of geographical names, coordinates and georeferenced maps. In total, there were more than 145,000 toponyms from three scales of map products stored in the database.

65. Working Paper No. 90, presented by the Celtic Division, informed the session of the existence of the web-based Placenames Database of Ireland. The database was launched in 2008 and at present contained more than 100,000 names, including both the Irish- and English-approved forms, both having equal legal standing. The popular database possessed audio file functionality.

66. The Convener presented the report of the Working Group as Working Paper No. 77. The brief report outlined the list of working group objectives, key issues from the three meetings held since the twenty-fourth session and a list of members.

67. In most working papers submitted under agenda item 10, activities on the development and establishment of geographical names data files, services and publications were addressed. The reports provided information for different purposes, like GIS, map production or specific services for land management, health, addresses or other services. That positive trend underlined and recognized resolution VIII/6 of the Eighth United Nations Conference for the Standardization of Geographical Names, held in 2002, which recommended a better integration of geographical names into national, regional and international spatial data infrastructures.

XIV. Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology

68. In Working Paper No. 57, the Convener presented a report of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology. A change of Convenership from Israel to Sweden took place in 2007, and two meetings — in New York in 2007 and Vienna in 2008 — had been held. Efforts to cooperate with the Terminology Group of the International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS) had resulted in a joint meeting between the two groups in Toronto in 2008 and in the formation of a joint terminology group between the Group of Experts and ICOS.

69. On behalf of an expert from Brazil in the Portuguese-speaking Division, the Chair of the Group of Experts presented Working Paper No. 42, reporting on the development of a Portuguese-language version of most terms contained in the *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names*, along with a multilingual vocabulary for translators between Portuguese and English, French and Spanish.

70. In Working Paper No. 47 from the Arabic Division, an expert from Lebanon presented a paper on the Arabic language, outlining the external linguistic influences on the Arabic language over time and how those had become Arabized.

71. An expert from Lebanon, in Working Paper No. 48 from the Arabic Division, presented a paper proposing modifications to the Arabic section of the *Glossary of Terms*. The proposals included changes in relation to grammar, format, translation and content. It was recommended that problems of translation and name examples should be addressed by the Arabic Division and recommended to the Working

Group on Toponymic Terminology for consideration of incorporation in the next version of the *Glossary of Terms*.

72. In Working Paper No. 72, from the East Central and South-East Europe Division, an expert from Turkey accounted for the process of translation of the *Glossary of Terms* into Turkish and the creation of a database. The joint effort of the General Command of Mapping and the Turkish Language Society had ensured that most terminology had received a precise and unique Turkish translation and correlation with English.

73. The Convener presented Working Paper No. 88, which provided a comparative overview of the definition of terms in the Group of Experts glossary and the preliminary ICOS List of Key Onomastic Terms. The ICOS List was primarily onomastic in focus, which explained the discrepancies in relation to the Group of Experts glossary, both in relation to the number of terms and in scope. Issues of definition, terminology and the creation of a joint terminology group were discussed.

XV. Activities relating to the Working Group on Romanization Systems

74. The Convener noted that the mandate of the Working Group was to consider and agree on a single romanization system for use in the United Nations for each non-roman writing system. In Working Paper No. 22, the Convener reported on activities since 2007 and provided updated information regarding a number of romanization systems. Past meetings, website updates, publications and membership were also discussed.

75. In Working Paper No. 55 from the Arabic Division, an expert from Tunisia presented the romanization software developed by the National Remote Sensing Centre of Tunisia in the context of setting up a Tunisian toponymic database that contained geographical names in Arabic, French and romanized forms.

76. The romanization of Arabic was further examined in Working Paper CRP.1, presented by the Arabic Division, which noted the necessity for stability in a romanized system and described the goal of adopting the unified Arabic romanization system, as agreed at the Third Arab Conference on Geographical Names, in 2007.

77. The French-speaking Division presented Working Paper CRP.3, noting the requirement for romanized forms in many media and describing a newly approved French official romanization system for Arabic developed for the French language that captured both the original phonetics and the nuances of French orthography.

78. The Convener noted the relevance of romanization issues to many areas of the work of the Group of Experts and stressed the importance of continued collaborative work in order to agree upon approved systems and verify the status of existing systems.

XVI. Activities relating to the Working Group on Country Names

79. Working Paper No. 66, presented by the Convener, reported on the recent activities of the Working Group. The current official List of Country Names,

submitted to the Ninth United Nations Conference for the Standardization of Geographical Names, was available at the website of the Group of Experts. A revised unofficial version was available at the web page of the Working Group. An expert from the Romano-Hellenic Division, the expert from Greece, expressed reservations regarding the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) country and language codes, as well as the language name, included in the entry regarding the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (see E/CONF.98/89/Add.1).

80. An expert from the East Central and South-East Europe Division reported in Working Paper No. 92 that the Board of Experts for Geographical Names of Turkey was revising and expanding a list of Turkish-language country and capital city names. Once approved, that list would be made available on the Board's website.

XVII. Activities relating to the Working Group on Publicity and Funding

81. The Asia South-East and Pacific South-West division presented Working Paper No. 8, which reported on the marketing of an educational e-learning package entitled "What's in a name — Australia's Geographical Names". The paper outlined the process and benefits of marketing the package directly to each of the state curriculum authorities in Australia and concluded that the ongoing project was proving successful.

82. Working Paper No. 41 was presented by the Africa South Division and reported on national hearings on geographical names in South Africa. It was noted that the hearings in most provinces were carried out with great engagement and that the process would be continued under the guidance of the South African Geographical Names Council in the remaining provinces.

83. The expert from the Africa South Division also summarized Working Paper No. 76, which provided information about the nomination process and subsequent appointment of the members of the South African Geographical Names Council. Both of those activities, as described in Working Papers No. 41 and No. 76, attracted the attention of the media, which had helped with promotion of the work of the Group of Experts.

84. In Working Paper No. 37, the Norden Division reported on ongoing and planned activities in connection with the Year of Cultural Inheritance in Norway. It was advised that the aim of that initiative was to make administrative bodies, and the public in general, more aware of geographical names as part of the intangible cultural heritage of the country. It was asked that a report on the achievements be submitted at a later meeting.

85. In Working Paper No. 9, the Convener reiterated that the aim of the Working Group was to make the activities of the Group of Experts more visible to governmental bodies, organizations and the public in general. In 2007 and 2008, joint meetings had been held with the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation. The Working Paper reported on several publicity actions, such as a press release that was offered to the secretariat of the Group of Experts for distribution, responses to press inquiries and presentations to various audiences. The development of a media kit was in progress, and the Convener would welcome contributions.

XVIII. Activities relating to the Working Group on Exonyms

86. The Convener reviewed the organization, membership and achievements of the Working Group, as described in Working Paper No. 6. The Working Group had met twice since the twenty-fourth Session and currently had 61 members from 27 countries; its website was accessible at www.zrc-sazu.si/ungegn/wge/exonyms.htm.

87. The Convener also presented Working Paper No. 11, which was the result of discussions at the previous Working Group meeting, held in Timişoara, Romania, in September 2008, which had formulated a draft resolution on guidelines for the use of exonyms for the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. The wording of the draft text had undergone much review and revision within the Working Group before presentation. A number of drawbacks were identified, which the Working Group would continue to consider.

88. The United Kingdom Division presented Working Paper No. 1 on the nature of the endonym, suggesting that only through understanding an endonym could an exonym be understood, contending that an endonym had an intrinsic quality dependent on neither official status nor political or linguistic boundaries and commenting that the Group of Experts definitions for endonym and exonym properly reflected that.

89. The Convener presented Working Paper No. 32, suggesting that the endonym status of a name could be considered relevant only within the boundaries of a particular language and that a speaker required an emotional link to a place for his or her geographical name for it to be considered an endonym.

90. In the active discussion following the presentation of Working Papers No. 1 and No. 32, it was noted that the root of the difference lay in the relation between a name and a feature.

91. The French-speaking Division presented Working Paper CRP.2, noting that all geographical names formed a part of cultural heritage, independent of language, and proposed that this be acknowledged, whether a name was an endonym or an exonym.

92. The Dutch- and German-speaking Division presented Working Paper No. 14, describing the procedures for geographical name application on road signs that had been developed for German-speaking countries and outlining a number of recommendations for their presentation in other areas.

93. The Norden Division presented Working Paper No. 26, describing the development of a list of exonyms in Finnish, which was likely to be published in 2010. It was noted that a great number of Finnish exonyms referred to places in countries neighbouring Finland.

94. In Working Paper No. 13, the Dutch- and German-speaking Division considered the application of geographical names within the railway industry. The challenge in establishing how such names should be treated in online and digital applications was noted, and some examples and possible solutions were described.

95. In summary, it was noted that the development of guidelines for the use of exonyms remained an important goal for the Working Group and that divergent views on the application of endonyms should be addressed. Those subjects would form the principal focus of the next Working Group meeting. The practical

achievements of the Working Group members in developing lists and in considering the application of exonyms were recognized.

XIX. Activities relating to the Working Group on Pronunciation

96. An expert of the Celtic Division presented Working Paper No. 89, summarizing the new audio guide to the pronunciation of geographical names in the Placenames Database of Ireland and giving an outline of the criteria, methodology and output of the pronunciation feature. That feature was proposed to be expanded beyond the current 11,000 audio pronunciation files. Issues of sound file storage and recommended pronunciation were discussed.

97. Working Paper No. 91 was presented by the Convener and reported on the meeting of the Working Group on Pronunciation, held in Vienna 2008. Main points discussed were how pronunciation was treated in the Toponymic Guidelines of the Group of Experts and in national gazetteers, as was the potential of web-based applications in relation to the pronunciation of geographical names.

XX. Activities relating to the Working Group on the Promotion of the Recording and Use of Indigenous, Minority and Regional Language Group Geographical Names

98. Working Paper No. 3 was given by an expert of the Dutch- and German-speaking Division and reported on the symposium on "Geographical names as a part of the cultural heritage", held from 19 to 21 May 2008 in Vienna, and the published proceedings thereof.

99. In Working Paper No. 35, the Chair of the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, on behalf of the representative of Suriname, presented the report about the activities of Suriname in relation to the recording and use of indigenous, minority and regional languages.

100. The representative of the French-speaking Division presented two studies in Working Paper No. 59. The purpose of those studies had been to collect all geographical names of French origin or influence in Manitoba and Alberta, Canada. Studies indicated that there were estimated to be around 10,000 such names in Western Canada.

101. Working Paper No. 67 was commented on by the Convener, owing to the absence of the representative of Namibia. The paper outlined the developments and challenges of the management of geographical names in Namibia.

102. In his verbal report, the Convener explained that no meetings had been held by the Working Group since the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, in 2007, but he provided a briefing on the creation of a website for the Working Group (which should be available later in 2009) and on the ongoing nature of the summary document on projects around the world. Other projects being developed within the framework of the Working Group would be discussed on the website.

XXI. Toponymic guidelines for map editors and other editors

103. On behalf of the Coordinator for Toponymic Guidelines, an expert from the Dutch- and German-speaking Division presented Working Paper No. 29, which included a short survey of countries publishing and updating toponymic guidelines. It was noted that there was a need for countries to create new models and ad hoc working groups for establishing toponymic guidelines, to draft papers on toponymic principles and procedures and to advocate for the importance of correct place name pronunciation.

104. In Working Paper No. 7, an expert from the United Kingdom Division presented revised toponymic guidelines for the United Kingdom, including a comprehensive set of data sources, glossaries, abbreviations and definitions. Some of that information was provided by means of Internet hyperlinks.

105. An expert from the Norden Division presented Working Paper No. 25, noting that the fourth revised edition of *Toponymic Guidelines for Map Editors and Other Editors for International Use: Finland* had been updated. Published in March 2009 and available on the Internet at http://www.kotus.fi/index.phtml?l=en&s=510, the new edition contained updates on the distribution of population by language, on recent publications and on administrative divisions.

106. The sixth edition of *Toponymic Guidelines: Austria* was announced by an expert of the Dutch- and German-speaking Division in Working Paper No. 30. That edition, available on the Internet at http://www.oeaw.ac.at/dinamlex/AKO/AKO_Toponymic_Guidelines.html, included German spelling rules made obligatory in Austrian schools in 2008.

107. In Working Paper No. 58, an expert from the Norden Division presented an updated version of the second edition of *Toponymic Guidelines: Denmark*, presented at the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. The updated edition reported changes in the administrative structures of the Faroe Islands and Greenland.

108. An expert from the Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic) presented Working Paper No. 69, which introduced an upcoming publication titled *Comprehensive Book of Directions on Toponymic Guidelines for Registration on Maps and Other Processors*. The phases in development of the project were detailed in the report.

109. Working Paper No. 93, presented by an expert from the Dutch- and German-speaking Division, contained *Toponymic Guidelines: Belgium*. The report gave details on the institutional and linguistic context, legal status and sources of Belgian toponyms.

XXII. Other toponymic issues

110. An expert from the Arabic Division submitted Working Paper No. 10, which summarized the use of geographic information systems to document the various aspects of heritage in Egypt.

111. Working Paper No. 46 was summarized by an expert from the China Division, reporting on the creation of the National Technical Committee for Standardization

of Geographical Names in China. That Committee was involved in the preparation, maintenance and implementation of standards. It was also involved in standards for signs, translation and relevant coding systems.

112. An expert from the French-speaking Division submitted Working Paper No. 60, relating to the reinstatement of a sense of place in the act of naming. The paper discussed some of the trends within naming processes and stressed the need to bring back a process that integrated the meaning of geographical names to the community.

113. Working Paper No. 61 was presented by an expert of the Arabic Division, summarizing the issues related to the historical occupation and exploration of geographical areas by various societies and the impact on toponyms caused by a range of historical, cultural and language imperatives.

114. An expert from the Asia South-West Division (other than Arabic) presented Working Paper No. 68, which discussed the role of historical geographical names and the need to record such names to preserve that aspect of cultural heritage. It was noted that the first volume of a four-volume encyclopedia of historical toponyms had been published.

115. The Chair submitted Working Papers No. 78 and No. 85, relating to requests from the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) seeking assistance relating to two projects associated with top-level domain names, those being the use of non-roman scripts and a new set of top-level domain names that could include the use of geographical names. ICANN was requesting assistance from the Group of Experts in relation to questions of documentation, examples and standards and a review of ICANN guidelines. The Convener of the Working Group on Romanization agreed to act as a liaison in relation to the matters raised in Working Paper No. 78. An expert from the Asia South-East and Pacific South-West Division had agreed to act as the head of a small group to work with ICANN on issues relating to Working Paper No. 85.

116. An expert from the Africa East Division presented Working Paper CRP.4, summarizing the structure and activities of the Standing Committee on Geographical Names of Kenya. The progress, challenges and problems of the work in Kenya were outlined.

XXIII. Special presentations

A. Second Administrative Level Boundaries project

117. A representative from the World Health Organization gave a special presentation on the United Nations Second Administrative Level Boundaries project. Emphasis was made on integrating standardized names of political administrative units into the United Nations Spatial Data Infrastructure. The presenter urged Member States and their national mapping authorities to contribute to the project.

B. Problems of addressing and development

118. A representative from the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) gave a special presentation on the challenges of global urban development. It was noted that within the world's rapidly growing slums,

development and assistance were hindered by a lack of locational attributes, such as addresses and official geographical names.

C. "AfricanGaz" project

119. A representative from the Economic Commission for Africa gave a special presentation on "AfricanGaz" (working title), an open-source database tool developed for Member States to record geographical names. The tool captured geographical name feature type, location and metadata, and allowed storage of audio and visual information related to the feature. The tool could also be easily amended to suit the specific needs of any country. The Economic Commission for Africa was offering assistance to countries in the creation of their database structures. That project received much appreciation from the Group of Experts, which offered its support through its divisions, working groups and the Task Team for Africa.

D. Google Earth on the standardization of geographical names

120. A representative from Google Earth gave a special presentation on efforts to standardize geographical names in the Internet services provided by Google. Both the representative and the experts noted the importance of providing geographical names from official sources. Continued cooperation between the Group of Experts and Google was advocated.

E. World Geographical Names Database

121. The secretariat of the Group of Experts presented the World Geographical Names Database, which was currently under development. The Database was multilingual and multiscriptual and stored names of countries, capitals and major cities, displaying the data through a map interface and in tabular format. The process, sourcing and status of data collection were explained, and the display of data in various formats was demonstrated. The Database allowed the inclusion of sound files for pronunciation of city endonyms, a feedback form and a page for frequently asked questions. The Chairperson expressed the support of the Group of Experts for its secretariat on that project. She urged members of the Group of Experts to provide accurate data through their Member States and formalized a Database working committee through the Working Groups on Country Names and Romanization Systems.

F. EuroGeoNames: lessons learned

122. A representative from EuroGeoNames gave a special presentation on the EuroGeoNames gazetteer service infrastructure. A video explaining the purpose and progress of the project, in which member countries provided geographical names data and both endonyms and relevant-language exonyms, among other data, was followed by a presentation on the lessons learned during the first phase of the project.

G. Africa essay and poem competition

123. The Convener of the Task Team for Africa briefed the session on the essay and poem competition run for Africa, organized for the first time in conjunction with the current session of the Group of Experts. All entries would be made available on the Group of Experts website. The winners of the competition were announced and prizes awarded. Thanks were expressed to those who reviewed the entries. It was proposed that similar competitions should be run in conjunction with future sessions of the Group of Experts.

XXIV. Preparations for the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

124. The Chair presented document GEGN/25/6, the proposed agenda for the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. The agenda had been adopted at the Ninth Conference and, as such, was for information only, to assist experts in developing resolutions for presentation at the Tenth Conference.

XXV. Provisional agenda for the twenty-sixth session of the Group of Experts

125. The Chair presented document GEGN/25/14, the provisional agenda for the twenty-sixth session of the Group of Experts. The session was proposed for the second quarter of 2011, in either Geneva or Vienna. The secretariat of the Group of Experts would communicate the date and venue of the session as soon as it was decided. The possible reduction of the number of days of the session was discussed, with views expressed for and against that idea.

126. In relation to the contents of the agenda, the Secretary advised of the deletion of item 1 (Opening of the session), which was deemed to be a work procedure rather than an agenda item. A correction to agenda item 7 (to be renumbered agenda item 6) to read "Activities of the Task Team for Africa" and the addition of two other agenda items — "Geographical names and cultural heritage" and "Issues of toponymic standardization" — was proposed. The agenda was adopted, as modified.

127. The Chair raised additional issues for the experts to consider in relation to the organization of work: including working groups identifying focal issues for discussion, papers being designated "for information only" and not for presentation, stricter adherence to the deadline for papers and electronic versions of papers in preference to printed copies.

XXVI. Adoption of the report

128. The draft report of the session, as amended during its reading, was adopted and would be published in its final, edited form as document E/2009/58.

XXVII. Expression of thanks

129. Thanks were expressed to the Chair; the Vice-Chairs; the Rapporteurs; the Division Chairs; the Working Group Conveners and Rapporteurs; special presentation, workshop and poster exhibition organizers; the secretariat and Secretary of the Group of Experts; the interpreters; and conference services staff for their contributions to the session.

Annex

Provisional agenda for the twenty-sixth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Report of the Chairperson.
3. Report of the secretariat of the Group of Experts.
4. Reports of the divisions.
5. Reports of the liaison officers and international organizations.
6. Activities of the Task Team for Africa.
7. Implementation of resolutions and activities relating to the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation.
8. Activities relating to the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy.
9. Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers.
10. Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology.
11. Activities relating to the Working Group on Romanization Systems.
12. Activities relating to the Working Group on Country Names.
13. Activities relating to the Working Group on Publicity and Funding.
14. Activities relating to the Working Group on Exonyms.
15. Activities relating to the Working Group on Pronunciation.
16. Activities relating to the Working Group on the Promotion of the Recording and Use of Indigenous, Minority and Regional Language Group Geographical Names.
17. Geographical names and cultural heritages.
18. Issues of toponymic standardization.
19. Toponymic guidelines for map editors and other editors.
20. Other toponymic issues.
21. Preparations for the Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.
22. Provisional agenda for the twenty-seventh session of the Group of Experts.
23. Adoption of the report.